



National 4-H Learning Priorities 2007-2012 Fall 2007 Update

Key Efforts of the National 4-H Learning Priorities:

- ✓ Create access to consistent, high quality, relevant professional learning opportunities based on the Priorities content areas.
- ✓ Provide opportunities to all 4-H youth development professionals, regardless of their role, location, or experience.
- ✓ Share collective resources, ensure sustainability, and provide consistency in core training areas.
- ✓ Grounded in 4-H Professional Research Knowledge and Competencies (4-H PRKC, 2004) to encourage high quality programming.
- ✓ Offer professional development and learning solutions through face-to-face training, distance education, continuous self-study, online resources, mentoring, and knowledge sharing.
- ✓ Led by Priority Content teams including educators, specialists, and program leaders who are recognized for their excellence in the field of youth development.
- ✓ Efforts reflect needs expressed from the field, the National 4-H Strategic Plan, and are closely aligned with the goals and on-going work of eXtension.

Six National 4-H Learning Priorities have been identified to focus on professional development for 4-H staff. The goal is to provide learning opportunities for 4-H professionals that will enhance program quality, which leads to positive outcomes for young people and improves the long-term success of 4-H.

Expanding Outreach to New and Underserved Audiences

Understanding, appreciating, and embracing the diversity of people, cultures, programs, and social networks within the 4-H system are the core themes of this content team. The team seeks to provide resources for professionals that will enable them to improve their ability to work successfully with diverse audiences. Resources will reflect the reality that “new” or “underserved” populations may be defined uniquely in different states, regions, or even within communities. As a result of the increased competency of 4-H staff to work with diverse audiences, 4-H will broaden its audience and ensure access for all youth.

Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development

The Essential Elements team is building a shared understanding and recognition of the characteristics that provide the foundation for 4-H Youth Development. Professionals who work with youth in clubs, special interest groups, camps, school enrichment programs, and after-school groups will understand the development theories that ground the Essential Elements and strive to deliver programs and experiences that contribute to the youth’s sense of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. The essential elements will be a critical component of all curriculum development, woven into the organizational strategies, and evident in event management throughout the 4-H system.

Volunteer Development for the Next Generation

The Volunteer Development Priority Team will create a comprehensive staff development program in volunteer development and volunteer management systems that will increase the competencies of 4-H youth development staff (including Operation Military Kids, and 4-H after school) across the nation. A key priority is to help staff create and maintain effective local volunteer management systems for their 4-H programs. Creating new systems and models for engaging volunteers in 4-H will help 4-H professionals deliver positive youth development programs that meet the needs and interests of young people and reinforce the image that 4-H is an appealing and relevant organization for today’s youth and volunteers.



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Evaluating for Impact

The Evaluating for Impact Team is focused on helping 4-H professionals become more comfortable and proficient in the area of program design and evaluation. Using the competencies from the 4-H PRKC, 4-H professionals will be able to assess both their current and desired level of competency in program design and evaluation and participate in learning opportunities that will be both on-line and face to face. As a result of the Evaluating for Impact Team's work, 4-H professionals will be able to develop and conduct sound program design and evaluation that will build the 4-H system's capacity for evaluation and lead to higher quality programming for our nation's young people.

Building Effective Organizational Systems

Helping 4-H educators handle day-to-day functions of program management and develop core skills and competencies are the central themes of the Organizational Systems priority and are grounded in the Professional Research and Knowledge Competency Model (4-H PRKC, 2004). The team will focus on organizational effectiveness, personal effectiveness and professionalism. Mastering these competencies will help 4-H professionals work more proficiently in the youth development field and achieve greater job satisfaction.

Mission Mandates

For generations, positive youth development has been achieved in 4-H through three mission mandates areas: Science, Engineering and Technology, Healthy Living, and Citizenship. Teams for each of the Mission Mandate areas are providing leadership for determining professional development and training content specific to each, while ensuring that their professional development efforts incorporate the other learning priorities. Mission Mandate efforts will be grounded in the essential elements of youth development; engage youth and adult volunteers in ways that take into account national trends in volunteerism; emphasize proficiency in program design and evaluation; and create effective organizational systems with a focus on reaching new and underserved audiences.

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